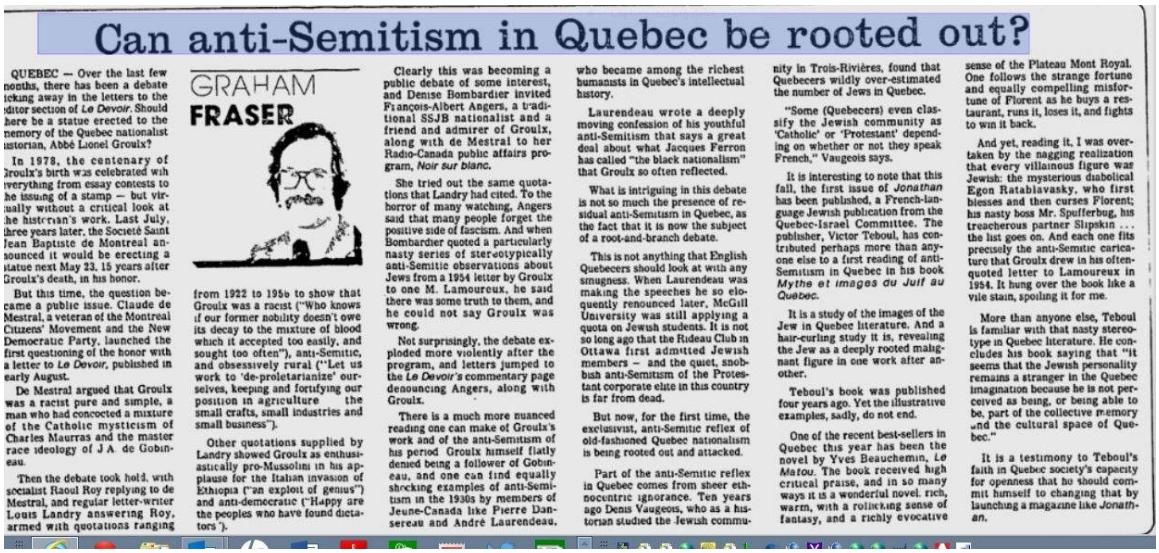
On Anti-Semitism in Quebec and JONATHAN, Published by Victor Teboul



Can anti-Semitism in Quebec be rooted out?

QUEBEC — Over the last few months, there has been a debate ticking away in the letters to the editor section of *Le Devoir*. Should there be a statue erected to the memory of the Quebec nationalist historian, Abbé Lionel Groulx?

In 1978, the centenary of Groulx's birth was celebrated with everything from essay contests to the issuing of a stamp — but virtually without a critical look at the historian's work. Last July, three years later, the Societé Saint Jean Baptiste de Montreal announced it would be erecting a statue next May 23, 15 years after Groulx's death, in his honor.

But this time, the question became a public issue. Claude de Mestral, a veteran of the Montreal Citizens' Movement and the New Democratic Party, launched the first questioning of the honor with a letter to *Le Devoir*, published in early August.

De Mestral argued that Groulx was a racist pure and simple, a man who had concocted a mixture of the Catholic mysticism of Charles Maurras and the master race ideology of J.A. de Gobineau.

Then the debate took hold, with socialist Raoul Roy replying to de Mestral, and regular letter-writer Louis Landry answering Roy, armed with quotations ranging

GRAHAM FRASER

from 1922 to 1956 to show that Groulx was a racist ("Who knows if our former nobility doesn't owe its decay to the mixture of blood which it accepted too easily, and sought too often"), anti-Semitic, and obsessively rural ("Let us work to 'de-proletarianize' ourselves, keeping and fortifying our position in agriculture the small crafts, small industries and small business").

Other quotations supplied by Landry showed Groulx as enthusiastically pro-Mussolini in his applause for the Italian invasion of Ethiopia ("an exploit of genius") and anti-democratic ("Happy are the peoples who have found dictators").

Clearly this was becoming a public debate of some interest, and Denise Bombardier invited François-Albert Angers, a traditional SSJB nationalist and a friend and admirer of Groulx, along with de Mestral to her Radio-Canada public affairs program, *Noir sur blanc*.

She tried out the same quotations that Landry had cited. To the horror of many watching, Angers said that many people forget the positive side of fascism. And when Bombardier quoted a particularly nasty series of stereotypical anti-Semitic observations about Jews from a 1954 letter by Groulx to one M. Lamoureux, he said there was some truth to them, and he could not say Groulx was wrong.

Not surprisingly, the debate exploded more violently after the program, and letters jumped to the *Le Devoir's* commentary page denouncing Angers, along with Groulx.

There is a much more nuanced reading one can make of Groulx's work and of the anti-Semitism of his period. Groulx himself flatly denied being a follower of Gobineau, and one can find equally shocking examples of anti-Semitism in the 1930s by members of Jeune-Canada like Pierre Dansereau and André Laurendeau, who became among the richest humanists in Quebec's intellectual history.

Laurendeau wrote a deeply moving confession of his youthful anti-Semitism that says a great deal about what Jacques Ferron has called "the black nationalism" that Groulx so often reflected.

What is intriguing in this debate is not so much the presence of residual anti-Semitism in Quebec, as the fact that it is now the subject of a root-and-branch debate.

This is not anything that English Quebecers should look at with any smugness. When Laurendeau was making the speeches he so eloquently renounced later, McGill University was still applying a quota on Jewish students. It is not so long ago that the Rideau Club in Ottawa first admitted Jewish members — and the quiet, snobbish anti-Semitism of the Protestant corporate elite in this country is far from dead.

But now, for the first time, the exclusivist, anti-Semitic reflex of old-fashioned Quebec nationalism is being rooted out and attacked.

Part of the anti-Semitic reflex in Quebec comes from sheer ethnocentric ignorance. Ten years ago Denis Vaugeois, who as a historian studied the Jewish community in Trois-Rivières, found that Quebecers wildly over-estimated the number of Jews in Quebec.

"Some (Quebecers) even classify the Jewish community as 'Catholic' or 'Protestant' depending on whether or not they speak French," Vaugeois says.

It is interesting to note that this fall, the first issue of *Jonathan* has been published, a French-language Jewish publication from the Quebec-Israel Committee. The publisher, Victor Teboul, has contributed perhaps more than anyone else to a first reading of anti-Semitism in Quebec in his book *Mythe et images du Juif au Québec*.

It is a study of the images of the Jew in Quebec literature. And a hair-curling study it is, revealing the Jew as a deeply rooted malignant figure in one work after another.

Teboul's book was published four years ago. Yet the illustrative examples, sadly, do not end.

One of the recent best-sellers in Quebec this year has been the novel by Yves Beauchemin, *Le Matou*. The book received high critical praise, and in so many ways it is a wonderful novel: rich, warm, with a rollicking sense of fantasy, and a richly evocative sense of the Plateau Mont Royal. One follows the strange fortune and equally compelling misfortune of Florent as he buys a restaurant, runs it, loses it, and fights to win it back.

And yet, reading it, I was overtaken by the nagging realization that every villainous figure was Jewish: the mysterious diabolical Egon Ratablavasky, who first blesses and then curses Florent; his nasty boss Mr. Spufferbug, his treacherous partner Slipskin ... the list goes on. And each one fits precisely the anti-Semitic caricature that Groulx drew in his often-quoted letter to Lamoureux in 1954. It hung over the book like a vile stain, spoiling it for me.

More than anyone else, Teboul is familiar with that nasty stereotype in Quebec literature. He concludes his book saying that "It seems that the Jewish personality remains a stranger in the Quebec imagination because he is not perceived as being, or being able to be, part of the collective memory and the cultural space of Quebec."

It is a testimony to Teboul's faith in Quebec society's capacity for openness that he should commit himself to changing that by launching a magazine like *Jonathan*.

by **Graham Fraser, The Gazette**

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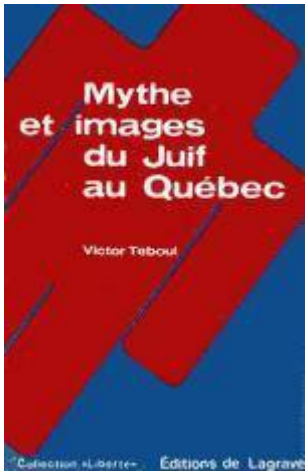

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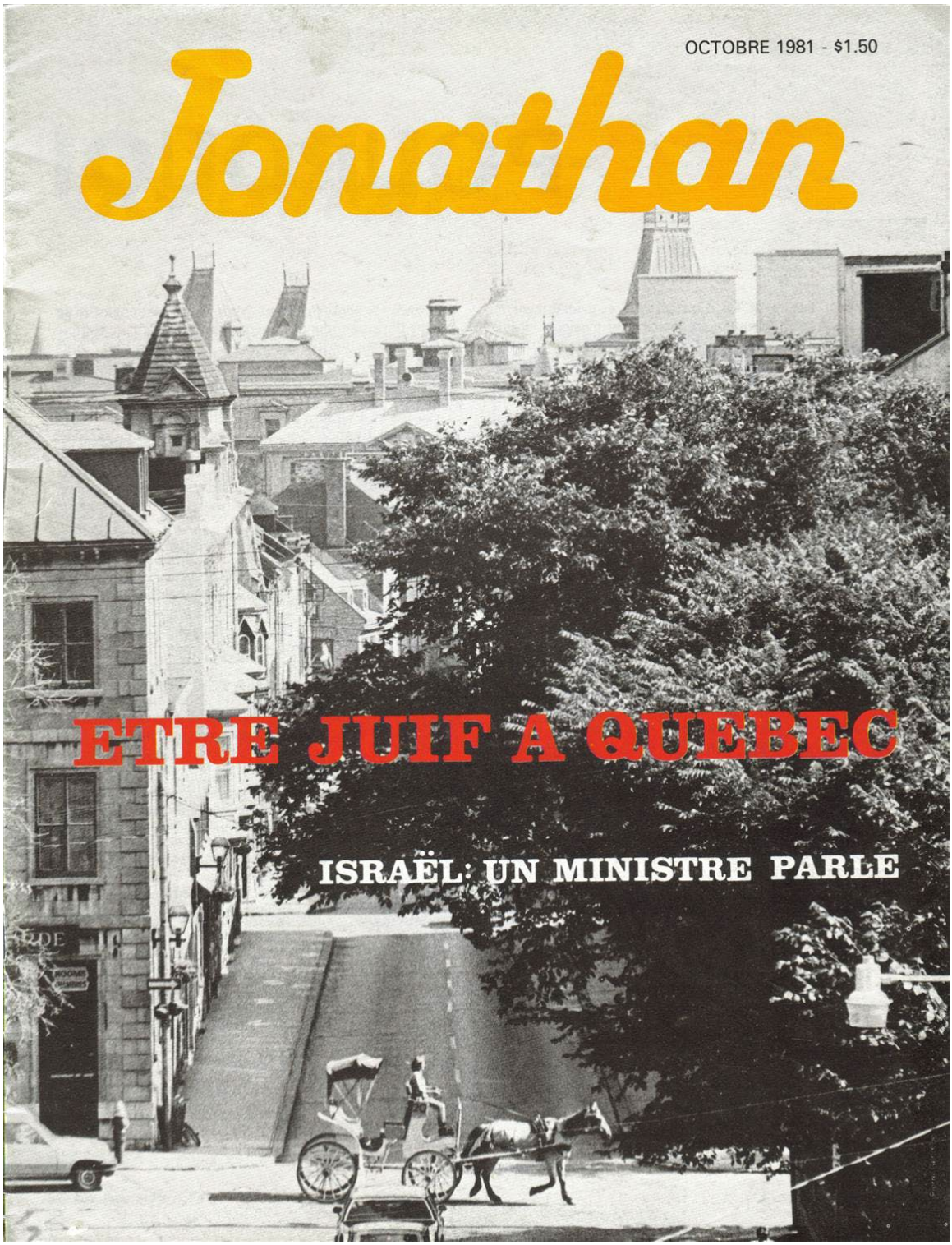
Grahama Fraser's column, Can antisemitism in Quebec be rooted out ? The Gazette, November 3, 1981.

The magazine was named Jonathan to honour the memory of Netanyahu's brother, Yonatan, commander of the Entebbe Raid, who lost his life during the rescue operation.

OCTOBRE 1981 - $1.50

Jonathan



ETRE JUIF A QUEBEC

ISRAËL: UN MINISTRE PARLE

CIC French-language magazine (Canadian Jewish News, Oct. 8, 1981, p.5.)

is aimed at francophone community

Oct 8/81

By JANICE ARNOLD

MONTREAL —

At first glance the cover seems incongruous: a horse-drawn caleche makes its way through the rolling, narrow streets of Quebec City's old section and across the black-and-white photo is the caption "Etre juif a Quebec" in red letters.

This is the cover of the first issue of Jonathan, a magazine published by the Israel Committee that is as unusual as its name. It is the only French-language Jewish magazine in Quebec, but Jonathan's target readership is not francophone Jews. Rather, editor Victor Teboul, who is CIC Quebec director, says the magazine is intended for "francophone Quebecois who are in the mainstream of Quebec cultural life today."

Specifically, this means persons involved in academia, the media and government, in the 25-50 years age group. (Premier Rene Levesque's advisor on intercultural affairs, Evelyn Dumas, was present at the magazines official launching.

That front page caption, the title of one of the articles inside, actually sums up the purpose of the magazine — to explain what it means to be Jewish in Quebec, as well as to offer a positive journalistic view of Israel.

"People don't understand how Jews have a long history in Quebec and yet identify so strongly with Israel. We want to get across that supporting Israel does not conflict with our belonging here," said Teboul.

Egyptian-born Teboul believes there is a definite "market" in Quebec for such a magazine. "There is a strong interest in the culture of the ethnic groups of Quebec and a desire for dialogue."

Teboul should know. He helped produce two television series on the Jewish community in Quebec, part of a program on the cultural minorities aired by Radio-Quebec during the 1979-80 and 1980-81 season. They proved popular and were repeated. Also a new, third series will be broadcast this coming year.

Taboul, 36, is also the author of "Mythe et Images du Juif au Quebec," published in 1978, a controversial work on how the Jew has been portrayed in French-Canadian literature. He was named CIC Quebec director in March.

The name Jonathan has three main interpretations. The most basic recalls the friendship between the biblical David and Jonathan recounted in the Book of Samuel. Secondly, the name commemorates Jonathan Netanyahu, the Israeli officer in charge of the Entebbe raid. (There is a Jonathan Institute in Israel, named after him, to combat terrorism.) Finally, the name recalls the book "Jonathan Livingston Seagul," which was widely read in Quebec and lends Jonathan an "ecological evocation."

The first issue (dated October) contains articles by Bernard Levy, an Egyptian Jew who edits the Universite de Montreal publication Chercheurs, who writes about his feelings as a francophone and "atheistic Jew;" Claude Marcil, a Quebec City journalist, on the dwindling Jewish community in "la Vieille Capitale; "and teacher Penny Benarrosh, a Sephardi, entitled "Peut-on etre juif et quebecois?" in which she discusses the absence of Jews in the Quebec "cultural debate."

In addition, Jonathan contains an interview with Hebrew University professor Shlomo Elbaz, a writer and literary critic who recently completed a year of lecturing at the U de M. Elbaz draws some parallels between the Quebecois and the Israeli cultural struggle, comparing the increasing use of Quebec "joual" in literature and theatre to Israel's experienee with modern Hebrew.

The issue carries what it calls an "exclusive" interview with Israel foreign affairs Yitzhak Shamir by Maariv correspondent Gabriel Strasman and an essay by U de M student Johnne Giguere giving her impressions from two trips to Israel.

Teboul plans to make interviews with Israel politicians, artistis, scientists and labor leaders a regular feature. Quebecers who have been to Israel will be encouraged to submit pieces on their experiences.

Twenty pages, Jonathan is Time Magazine size, printed on good quality bond with a glossy cover, which will be different each issue, and has a bold, racy layout. It will be published eight times a year but plans call for it to eventually go monthly.

Teboul says Jonathan has about 200 paid subscribers at a $6 annual rate, soon to be raised to $9. They are not, he added, the same people who received the CIC's defunct publications Regards sur Israel. A new mailing list was drawn up to reach a different clientele.

Jonathan has also been distributed to newsstands in Montreal, Quebec City, Sherbrooke, Hull, Ottawa, Chicoutimi and Trois-Rivieres and sells for $1.50.

Below : Ted Greenfield, chairman of the Quebec Israel Committee presents Washington Israeli ambassador official Benjamin Netanyahu with Special bound copies of Jonathan. The French-language magazine, published by the Committee was founded by Victor Teboul, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Quebec Israel Committee.

Canadian Jewish News, April 12, 1984. Ted Greenfield, chairman of the Quebec Israel Committee presents Washington Israeli ambassador official Benjamin Netanyahu with Special bound copies of Jonathan. The French-language magazine, published by the Committee

was founded by Victor Teboul, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Quebec Israel Committee.

Below is the official letter addressed to Victor Teboul by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu :

30 March 1984

Dear Mr. Teboul:

Thank you again for the hard-cover edition of your publication "Jonathan". I was recently in Israel and showed it to my parents. They were deeply moved, and asked me to convey this to you.

Sincerely yours,

Benjamin Netanyahu

Mr. Victor Teboul
Director
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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS

DECEMBER 8, 1983

Jonathan a hit at book exhibit

The 72,000 persons who visited the Salon du livre de Montreal held recently at Place Bonaventure had a chance to browse through books from Israel as well as become familiar with the local magazine Jonathan.

The 6-day event featured the exhibition and sale of books by various publishers, representation from different countries, and visits by authors.

Both Israel and Jonathan, which is published by the Canada-Israel Committee, had booths at the fair.

Reaction from the mostly francophone crowd was "overwhelmingly favorable," said Jonathan editor Victor Teboul. Staff and contributors manned the booth, giving away back copies to passersby and explaining the French-language magazine's goal of promoting rapproachment between the Jewish and francophone communities.

The most popular issue, said Teboul, was the one with Premier Rene Levesque on the cover. It was in this October 1982 that Teboul explained the reasons for the Lebanon war.

"The public was also very interested in the pluralistic nature of Israeli society as reported in the magazine," he said. Teboul estimates more than a thousand people got to know Jonathan through the Salon de livre.

Israeli officials were pleased that, as a result of the salon, two Quebec publishing houses expressed an interest in translating into French some of the Israeli publications, mostly tourist guides and religious material, including a Bible printed in newspaper form and written in journalistic language.

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Page 28-The Canadian Jewish News, Thursday, December 13, 1984

French-language magazine "building bridges"

Jonathan marks 3rd year with cocktail reception

By JANICE ARNOLD

MONTREAL — The third anniversary of Jonathan, the French-language magazine published by the Canada-Israel Committee, was celebrated with a cocktail reception during the recent Salon du Livre de Montreal at Place Bonaventure.

Many Quebec journalists including Pierre Bourgault, Lyslane Gagnon, Clement Trudel, Jean Pellerin and Louis Martin as well as Dollard MP Gerry Weiner were in the large crowd which joined in the vin d'honneur, alongside representatives of Jewish community organizations.

Jonathan, named for Jonathan Netanyahu, the comunander of the Entebbe raid, first appeared in October, 1981. Its goal was and is "to explain Israel and the Jewish community to francophone Quebec opinion-makers in a way that would not insult the intelligence."

The magazine, published about eight times a year, is mailed to academics, members of the media, civil servants and others throughout the province who have influence on the way the public thinks.

"We hope to build bridges between the Jewish community and the Quebecois," said Victor Teboul, director of Jonathan since its inception.

On matters related to Israel, the magazine tries to avoid "propaganda and the image that Israel is monolithic," he said. On the local Jewish community, "the message is simple: since the 1960s — before the Parti Quebecois came to power — the community has been adapting to a French Quebec society.

"The proof is in the increased number of hours of French taught in the Jewish schools and in the fact that the Jewish community has the highest percentage of bilingual members of any non-French group."

Nevertheless the Quebecois and Jewish communities did not know each other and worse they feared each other, said Teboul. The growth of the Quebec nationalist movement only accelerated the uneasiness on both sides. "The irony is that the election of the PQ had the effect of bringing the two grou together b government cultural c were a realit be dealt with

Teboul cla distribution of had a discerni attitudes to Isr of Quebec inte toured Israel years ago with Pierre Bourg Israel this yea trips organized These trips h them to meet v raeli counterpa their return, written — ge tively — about Teboul. "Ther tivity that wa before."

Bourgault's The Gazette in on his impressi was translated and published li daily Maariv

French-speak intellectuals brought to Que and a full-time change professo ed to be teachi University in Q for the first time in September,

Teboul's pla coming year inc sertion of an En of the articles in of Jonathan.

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For a detailed review of Quebec – Israel events and exchanges organised by Jonathan magazine, please click on :

https://www.tolerance.ca/Article.aspx?ID=504415&L=fr

(**Or copy the above link on your browser**)

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Updated Dec. 31, 2022